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HICKORY HALL: OR THE OUTCAST.

A ROMANCE OF THE BLUE RIDGE.

IN FOUR PARTS.

BY MRS. EMMA D. E. SOUTHWORTH.

Learn how sorrows sting, tread fields of fire.

In dream gulfs of cold eternal life.

Its doom shall through tracks of endless void.

But cannot live in shame—'tis doom of hell.

PART IV.—Continued.

THE VICTIM BRIDE.

"A dream is on my soul!

I see a slumberer crowned with flowers, and smiling

As in delighted vision, on the brink

Of a great doom—'tis *Helen's Vesper of Delusion*."

"Regina! my dearest sister! I am delighted

and—*and—*to see you! Whence come you? How

come you? But before you reply, take this easy chair, and—give me your bonnet!

Place your feet upon this footstool! You look so weary! You rode all night! Who escorted you?

Nay, do not answer! You look so exhausted!

Wolfgang, my dear fellow—but not I will run myself

It was with something like this tirade of ejaculations of astonishment, joy, love, and solicitude, that I received my sister placed her in the lounge chair, set a cushion under her feet, and ran off to order refreshments.

I returned, followed by a waiter bringing in coffee, and a chambermaid to take Miss Fairfield's things and receive her orders. I found Wolfgang standing by Regina's side, stooping over her with a countenance beaming with happiness, his left arm caressingly encircling her shoulders, his right hand clasping hers, and she no longer pale and weary, but blushing with pride and pleasure, and her radiant eyes were veiled beneath his ardent gaze. He drew off as we entered, and each resumed composure. Regina arose with her accustomed stately self-possession, and, attended by the chambermaid, retired from the room to refresh herself by a change of dress, saying to me, *en passant*, that I might command the waiter of refreshments, and if we had not already breakfasted, she would join us at that meal. I said that we had not, and she left us.

Breakfast for three was served in our parlor, and in half an hour Regina entered, every vestige of fatigue and discomfort fled from her countenance and bearing, and she sat in a plain but rich morning dress of India muslin, looking beautiful and graceful as ever.

During breakfast, I made no inquiries concerning the motive of her extraordinary journey at this particular time, when she knew I was soon to return home. I rightly conjectured that she had a somewhat lengthy explanation to make; besides which, the waiter was in attendance, and we could have no confidential conversation in the presence of a servant.

When our meal was over, however, and when the waiter had removed the breakfast service, set the room in order, and retired, Regina seated herself in the easy chair, placed her feet upon the footstool, summoned Waltraven and myself to her side, and in a calm voice and with a composed manner informed us that our guardian, using the great power intrusted to him by our father's will, had converted all our property into cash, and fled with it to the West Indies—that, too, just on the eve of my journey, when in a few weeks he knew he would be called upon to deliver up his trust!

By this piece of unparalleled rascality we were left—no, not "beggars," nor "penurious," quite. We might have between us, in pocket money, jewelry, and personal appointments, some five or six thousand dollars—that was all.

At first, I was too completely stunned by the news—of our great loss, but of our guardian's great villainy—to feel the real sharpness of our misfortune.

I was astonished, also, at Regina's stately composure. Could nothing on earth disturb that sovereign self-possession, that radiant serenity? No; nothing external or impersonal, it seemed, could discompose her.

I turned in despair and looked at Waltraven. How would he receive the news of his friend's calamity? When I first turned my eyes full upon him, taking him as he was by surprise, he looked positively angry with me; I had never seen any exhibition of triumph like that in him before!

What did he mean? Before I had time to ask, his obstreperousness was reined in, and his features formed an expression of gravity.

Regina further informed me that she had availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the journey of the Right Reverend Bishop—

who was travelling north to the Convention, to join her brother; that she had written to warn me of her approach—a letter which, by the way, I never received.

Miss Fairfield then excused herself, and left us to seek needed repose.

As soon as she had gone, Wolfgang, who had with difficulty restrained his excitement all this time, impetuously threw himself down beside me, and, clasping me as if I had been his sweetest, exclaimed, vehemently—

"My brother! my heart! command me! Half my powers and resources—command me! Half my father's wealth is mine when I demand it—it is yours when you want it!"

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. I am not overwhelmed by this misfortune, dear Wolfgang, though I am in danger of being so by your wholehearted goodness."

"And you will let me serve you?"

"Not to the fanciful extent or in the manner that you propose, my dear Waltraven! You are asked by this news even more than I am. My generous fellow, be quiet. As you perceive, neither my sister nor myself is driven mad by this misfortune. I shall execute now a plan that I often thought of even in my days of independence, and in doing so enter a line of life for which I have at times had a very strong inclination."

"And what is that?"

"The Christian ministry! I shall immediately curtail every unnecessary expense, reduce my living to the severest economy, convert all my personal effects to cash, and commence a course of theological reading."

"Fairfield, you constrain my admiration! Have you, then, no painful regrets for the past—no gnawing anxiety for the future?"

"None for myself."

"You astonish me!"

"But—"

"Well?"

"For another?"

"Well? For another—for whom, Fairfield? Have you been falling in love? though that could scarcely happen without my knowledge, as we have been so inseparable—but yet, it is so!"

"No, I have not fallen in love! Of course you know that; and you should know also that I speak only of my sister! I said, seriously—

"Your sister!" he exclaimed, in what I thought a very unnatural surprise. "Your sister?"

"Certainly—my sister."

"And why, pray?"

"Is it so strange that I should feel anxiety for the future of Regina after this serious reverse?"

"No, certainly not—assuredly not! Excuse me! I—my thoughts fly occasionally, and I speak, perhaps, rather in reference to my own phase of mind, and from my own point of view, than from yours. Go on, dear Fairfield! Believe me, though my thoughts fly, they only circle round and round you and your interests, my brother. Go on, I pray you! Tell me all your chances of anxiety?"

"Regina, then! I could very well support my sister in a small way; and, at a moderate outlay, I could establish her at the head of a new Female Academy—but—"

"Well, my dear friend?"

"Her haughtiness of heart unites her alike for dependence upon me, or servitude of others. This lofty pride troubles me the more, that I have no sort of sympathy with it—cannot understand it fully; and, as far as I do, utterly condemn it! Human pride is folly, or insanity. The Saviour of the world was not proud!"

"Come, Ferdinand, my reverend friend! don't anticipate the privilege of the vestments! For myself, I adore that 'lofty pride' of Miss Fairfield. It is indissolubly entwined with the most exalted virtues, which could not exist without it!"

"You speak like a lover!"

"I speak truth. Her 'lofty pride' sustains the highest sentiments of truth, courage, generosity, fortitude!"

"I have never seen her 'fortitude' tested yet. It is that which I dread!"

"You have never seen her fortitude tested? It is not in this sudden and severe reverse of fortune?"

"No, only her courage is tested here. She has met, but has not yet borne, the evils of this misfortune! Courage only needs calamity bravely! It takes fortitude to endure strongly and patiently. Courage dares misfortune—fortitude sustains it; courage—"

"Courage is acute fortitude, and fortitude is chronic courage," you mean, mediocrity speaking!"

"Fudge!"

"Certainly! I beg your pardon, Fairfield, for cutting short both your sermon on pride and your disquisition on courage and fortitude, because the former was ill-timed, the latter essentially unphilosophical, and both would have run to I know not what length! Now, then! let us return to the more attractive subject of Miss Fairfield."

"I was saying that I have no sympathy with my sister's pride! I do not understand it, and it troubles me for her future."

"And I repeat most emphatically, that I adore that pride!"

"You are an enthusiast!"

"I worship that pride! That lofty spirit, which is not assumption, nor arrogance, but a calm, majestic, unconscious assumption of her own lordship, which is not a vain, but a noble, unalienable royalty! The trine royalty of transcendent beauty, goodness, and genius!"

"Oh! you are mad!"

"I adore to whom honor is due!"

"Yes! but that is not to the haughty! He who speaks those words said also: 'The humble shall be exalted, and the proud shall be brought low.'—"

"That is a text of the fear of God; but I confess that these things trouble me for my dearest sister! It seems to me that her severe discipline has already begun! I do hope—"

"Pshaw! hush! Nonsense! Don't preach! You are not in the holy order of monks!"

Waltraven, interrupting me, in a luscious voice and with an agitated manner—

"I looked at him in surprise.

He shouldered twice or three in his old way, got up and went to the window, and said—

"It seems to me you are croaking this evening, Fairfield! to say nothing of a very unbrotherly severity to a trait of character in your only sister, which I for one cannot consider a fault, but must look upon with high respect, even when—"

He stopped abruptly.

"When carried to excess. Yes! something of that sort," he said, with an involuntary writhing of his beautiful lips.

A twinge of remorse wrung me for an instant. I felt that I had been severe with the feeble of me, dear Regina, and that it was not only ungenerous, but unjust, to speak of her fault in her absence; so I said—

"You know that I have no fraternal insensibility to my sister's noble character, Wolfgang?"

"Ah! you have! You do not see, do not acknowledge that it is pride keeps that high, pure character so spotless from even conventional little weaknesses?"

"Yes, I do! but I see also that 'pride' makes Regina stately, uncompromising, terribly intolerant of the little social and conventional mannae and—"

The effect of my words upon her was fearful as unexpected! He blanched suddenly, dropped into a chair, and gazed luridly from under the shade of his long black lashes, as if I had wilfully and wantonly outraged him.

I was about done with surprise at my eccentric mood of Waltraven; and, as, for something, impelled me to go on. "What is neither always reasonable nor Christian, her right of conscience is not to be molested, and I know and feel it is this that has terrified me for my sister! It is this that makes me shudder when I recall the fearful words, a thunder voice—'Pride hath before a fall, and the haughty temper before destruction.' I suddenly felt a strong grasp upon my shoulder, and the husky, inaudible words—

"For God's sake, hush!" and Waltraven rushed out of the room.

"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," said my sister Regina, laying her fair hand affectionately on my shoulder, and sinking softly into a chair by my side.

She looked so sad, so proud, so joyous, yet—so strangely embarrassed—

"Which how beautiful you are, Regina! exclaimed Blanche! Fair one with golden locks!" I exclaimed in involuntary admiration and fondness. And she smiled! Dazzlingly beautiful! She had arisen, restored by her long morning sleep, had arisen, her cold bath, and dressed for dinner. She wore a very light blue satin, with fine lace fall to the short sleeves, and low corsage. Her splendid pale gold hair was rolled back from her forehead, and worn in a large knot behind. She had floated in and sunk down by me, softly, lightly, gracefully, as a sun-gilded expanse cloud, a vision of celestial beauty.

"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," she repeated, without deigning to notice my admiration.

"I listen, dearest Regina," said I, seriously.

"Brother, I am engaged to be married to Wolfgang Waltraven."

I started to my feet, throwing off her hand by violence, and exclaiming vehemently—

"Are you so surprised?" she scornfully inquired.

"No, Regina! No!" I exclaimed emphatically, without replying to her last observation. "Yes, then, if I must repeat my declaration, no, it is not it that I am surprised at, but that she should have been so!"

"Why?" she asked, calmly, with scarcely a perceptible infection of surprise and contempt in her tone.

"You must not—shall not—cannot marry Waltraven!"

"Will you endeavor to make yourself intelligible, Ferdinand?" she demanded, coldly.

"Waltraven cannot in honor marry you, and he knows it."

"How do you know?"

"His snowy brow grew purple, he drew her proud crest haughtily up, and was preparing

slightly to rise and leave the room, when I laid my hand upon her with an imploring gesture, and, rising, went and turned the key in the door, sat down by her side, and beseeching her to listen to me with every unhesitating attention, I began, and gave her a minute, detailed account of my whole confidential connection with Waltraven, commencing from our earliest school days; passing through our life at the preparatory school; through our college friendship; including our joint visit to my guardian's house at Willow Hill, with the extraordinary scene in his chamber; and, lastly, my recent visit to Hickory Hall, with the frightful occurrence in my chamber in the dead of the first night of my arrival. I ended with imploring my sister, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by a marriage with him. For any other pool purpose than that of doing my duty and ensuring the happiness of my sister, I might just as well have been silent.

Regina heard me through, though, as my story progressed, I saw her lip curl, and, with a slowly withering countenance, and when I finished, she arose with flushing cheeks, and with a burning, consuming scorn, anger, and defiance—accusing me of degrading suspicions—denigrating to myself and to no one else, of treachery to my friend—of I know not what bores, and expressing with a contemptuous sneer her high trust in Wolfgang Waltraven's unimpeachable purity and honor. In short, she replied to me as any other haughty, high-spirited woman would reply to aspersions so cast upon the man she loved.

I attempted a rejoinder; but resuming her sovereign self-possession, with a gesture full of high command, she silently indicated her will to leave the room, and I went to the door, unlocked it, and held it open while she swept majestically through.

I felt myself relieved of a most disagreeable duty, which had been pressing upon me for some time, though I could not but regret the result. Loving Wolfgang and Regina almost with equal affection, and loving none others in the world but them, I wished their happiness above all things. Could their union have seemed likely to be a blessing to either, I should have been more than ready to consent to it. But, from all I had seen and heard, I feared that it would end in misery to both; therefore I had sought to break it up by attempting to break it up.

"I speak truth," Her 'lofty pride' sustains the highest sentiments of truth, courage, generosity, fortitude!"

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"How do you know?"

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and was adored by her. Yet I would look only on this side of the picture, where all was brilliant!

The next day we received a visit from Bishop North, under whose care Regina had travelled North. He condescended with us upon our misfortune when he came, but congratulated us upon our firmness and gaiety when he went away.

I promised to return his call; and, accordingly upon the second day I did so, and took that opportunity of informing him of my sister's contemplated marriage with Wolfgang Waltraven, and of unfolding to him my desire to enter a course of theological reading for the purpose of taking holy orders. I told him how long this had been on my mind, how long, even before I dreamed of a possible loss of fortune.

He highly approved my design, and placed his library at my service, saying me that, should I one time to return with him to the South, and take up my abode for the present at his house.

There were many reasons why I should feel no scruple in accepting the assistance of the venerable old man. He had in his youth been indebted to my grandfather for his own education, and subsequent establishment in the church in which he had risen to such high honor. Now, in his age, he was in a similar position, an elderly man, and but a small family, consisting of his wife, one son, and a daughter. He seemed very anxious to assist me, and soon overruled my faint objections.

I told him, however, that it would be impossible for me to return with him, or go South at all, until after my sister's marriage, when I promised to do so.

When I returned, I found that Waltraven and Regina had walked out together. They did not return until the dinner hour.

I passed over two weeks, the mornings of which were spent in walking, or riding out, or reading, music or conversation at home, and the evenings, in attending lectures, concerts, &c. abroad, or in some social pastime in our own parlor.

Regina was proudly, though bashfully, joyful, and Waltraven exhibited a haughty and happy self-consciousness, that became him greatly. Every day his step was more stately and elastic, his eye more steady and commanding. The regnant spirit was assuredly triumphant now!

At the end of two weeks, early one morning, he entered my chamber, with a haughty and proud air, and laid before me two papers, indicating the one that was to be signed, and the other that was to be read.

That was a letter from his father, Mr. Waltraven, giving consent to his marriage, and filled with affectionate expressions of regard for his son, and earnest prayers for the happiness of both, regretting that his infirmities must prevent his travelling North to be present at their marriage, and pressing Wolfgang to bring his wife to him, and to reside with him, and to be his constant attendant.

His letter ended with a message of affection and esteem for myself, a fervent tender of service, and an invitation to accompany my sister and her husband to Virginia. The letter was like an angel's voice, and I felt that I had been deceived by his haughty and proud air, and that he was still angry with me. Wolfgang looked black as the raven, and I felt that I had been deceived by his haughty and proud air, and that he was still angry with me.

This was the attested copy of a deed settling one hundred acres of land on Regina Fairfield. I read this twice, or three, before I looked up to see Waltraven leaning over my chair with his look of offensive assumption now fled, and in its place an expression of generous satisfaction.

"Why do you weep at this?" he asked, with a look of surprise.

"Not as you suppose, but because I feel that I have been deceived by his haughty and proud air, and that he was still angry with me."

"It means to express my own and my father's deep sense of the high honor Miss Fairfield confers upon our family, and I was led to my own unpleasant company and thoughts for the rest of the afternoon."

Very late in the afternoon they returned. Regina went to her chamber, changing her riding habit, and Waltraven came into our room, where I was still sitting. He rang the bell, and, throwing his whip, cap, gloves, &c., to the waiter who entered, directed him to bring wine. I approached him.

"Waltraven!"

"Well?"

"I have something to say to you."

"Out with it, man!"

"I am, I shall know you down first and forgive you afterwards."

"That will be Christian, but dangerous. You are engaged to my sister, and I am not a man to be trifled with."

"How do you know that?"

"She told me."

"Well, then? You told me to win her if I could!"

"Yes, but—"

"Well?"

"Circumstances have transpired since then!"

"You made no allowance for circumstances?"